

# Nadler to GOP: Stop Vilifying Department of Justice, Start Working with us to Enforce Civil Rights Laws

Thursday, 02 June 2011

WASHINGTON, D.C. - Today, Congressman Jerrold Nadler (D-NY), the top Democrat on the Judiciary Subcommittee on the Constitution, called on his GOP colleagues to stop making false allegations against the Civil Rights Division of the U.S. Department of Justice and, instead, to work with Democrats to ensure proper enforcement of current civil rights laws. At a Constitution Subcommittee hearing on the Civil Rights Division, Nadler urged bipartisanship in fighting real - and not fictitious - civil rights challenges.

"What is most distressing is that some of the same people who undermined and discredited the Civil Rights Division while they were there have now made a career of making false allegations against the Division," said Nadler. "What is disturbing is that the allegations all seem to have the same subtext: that the Division is being used to favor minorities to the detriment of whites. What they really mean is that the Division is now making an honest effort to enforce, in an even-handed manner, our civil rights laws - laws which they really don't like. It is a Willie Horton campaign pure and simple...It would be nice to have a hearing in which we actually discussed civil rights policy and enforcement, but perhaps that is hoping for too much in the current environment."

The following is the text of Nadler's opening statement, as prepared:

"Today, the Subcommittee continues its oversight of the Civil Rights Division of the Department of Justice. With the authority to enforce this nation's civil rights laws, the Division is the guardian of our fundamental values: freedom of religion, the right to be treated fairly, the right to cast a vote in a free and fair election, the right to a job, the right to a home, the right to an education, and, with the enactment of the Hate Crimes Prevention Act, the right to live one's life free from the threat of violent hate crimes.

"As our Subcommittee has documented, the Division was deeply troubled during the Bush years. As with other parts of the Justice Department, career civil rights attorneys were routinely overruled on legal matters by political appointees, hiring was illegally politicized, enforcement was, in some key areas, grossly neglected, and morale was as bad as at any time since the Division's establishment. The loss of dedicated career staff was alarming.

"President Obama signaled a new era by appointing as Assistant Attorney General, Tom Perez. He is a career civil rights lawyer, and he has been working hard to rebuild a Division that had lost many of its dedicated career attorneys, and that had become dangerously politicized. In addition to the historically challenging work of the Civil Rights Division, he has been rebuilding a decimated and demoralized office, and he has done so while dealing with such monumental tasks as the decennial redistricting.

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"As soon as each new allegation is debunked, we hear two more. I wouldn't be surprised if, even after an

independent investigation that completely discredited the allegations surrounding the New Black Panther Party - of voter intimidation without any voter ever complaining about being intimidated - we will still hear that case revived today. It is disgraceful.

"We actually face some serious civil rights challenges, and I hope to hear from Mr. Perez on how the Division is working to meet those challenges. It would be nice to have a hearing in which we actually discussed civil rights policy and enforcement, but perhaps that is hoping for too much in the current environment.

"Nonetheless I am pleased to welcome Mr. Perez, and I look forward to his testimony."

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